



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE SHUDDER IN LITERATURE.

BY JULES CLARETIE.

THE tragic fortune of Guy de Maupassant, one of the young masters of our literature, has drawn attention to the mysterious bonds which attach the literary creator to his creation, and the question has been asked whether the artist does not become unbalanced in choosing strange, cruel, odd, or fantastic subjects,—whether, finally, the shudder or the terror which he wishes to excite in others, does not affect him first, before moving his readers.

The question would not very directly concern M. Guy de Maupassant, who has of his own will touched only upon sane and vigorous subjects, overflowing with the sap of humanity, if in the work of the author of “Une Vie” and “Pierre et Jean” there were not to be found among other tales, such as “La Peur,” a disquieting and mysterious study, “Le Horla,” that morbid analysis of a psychological state, that journey after the discovery of an invisible force, of a new and redoubtable Being, the Horla; the Horla, who is to succeed man—the Horla, an immortal creature coming into the heritage of “him who dies daily.”

Certainly, in re-reading this story by the poor fellow who is now shut up in the asylum of Doctor Blanche—who, intoxicated as he has ever been with the open air and the fair fields bathed in sunlight, sees nothing, feels nothing, of spring’s young caresses; in studying closely this sort of strange autobiography, one finds in the “Horla” the very beginning of the delirium that has seized upon the writer. It came about at the time when he achieved this remarkable work, at the precise moment when that which science calls the period of incubation gave place to the period of restlessness. Indeed, Guy de Maupassant had even passed through two of the states, which, in this psychosis, succeed each other mathematically; incubation, restlessness, persecution, and dementia. Poor great writer, whose

sufferings are so clearly perceived in this short tale, written like a confession, in the form of a journal :

"*May 16.*—I am decidedly ill. . . . I have constantly that frightful sensation of a threatening danger, that dread of a coming misfortune, or of approaching death.

"*May 18.*—I have just consulted my doctor. He found my pulse rapid, eye dilated, nerves vibrating, but without any alarming symptom. I am to use douches and drink bromide of potassium. . . .

"*May 25.*—I sleep . . . two or three hours . . . then a dream, no, a nightmare, seizes me. . . . Someone approaches me, looks at me, feels of me, jumps on my bed. . . . I wake in terror. . . . I light my candle. I am alone.

"*June 2.*—My condition is aggravated still more. What can be the matter with me? The bromide has no effect. . . ."

And the journal goes on thus, almost like a medical report, with a scientifically exact delineation of suffering ("A shudder seizes me, not a shivering with cold, but a strange chill of anguish"), up to the last line, when the author's hero—and one thinks then of the author himself—cries out: "I must kill myself !"

And while I am reading over this "*Horla*," to seek there for the trace, to find there the premonitions, of the misfortune that has overwhelmed M. de Maupassant, I cannot keep from seeing him again, revolver in hand, in the room at Cannet, trying to escape by suicide from that other *Horla* whose sinister approach he felt ; the mania of persecution.

Very certainly M. de Maupassant was haunted by I know not what delirious fancies, the terror and also the vertigo of death, the pang of the infinite, when he wrote that short, grim story which seems to us to-day so mournfully prophetic.

But it would not be exact to say that the artist who is in love with the Mystery of the Unknowable, who is attracted, and urged on by the Fantastic or by the Infinite, is necessarily condemned to a psychical condition like that of the author of the "*Horla*." Dementia is not the result of certain kinds of work any more than the taste for such researches and the habit of making them are the signs of any derangement whatever. An artist, a writer, can cross every *milieu*, treat every subject, without submitting to the influence of it, just as a general can cross the thick of the fight without being wounded.

It is nevertheless true that certain subjects are unwholesome, disquieting, perilous. The novelist, seated at his work-table, the

dramatic writer imagining the play which is to attract and stir the public, is inevitably constrained to a sort of auto-suggestion. They must really see their characters live and act; and, what is more, they see life as their heroes see it. There can be no really engrossing creation without this fusing of created and creator. Balzac, dying, sent them to look for Dr. Bixion, the great physician of the "Comédie Humaine!" "Only Bixion can save me! If Bixion does not come, if they do not find Bixion, I am lost!" Thus was life attached to his dream.

When the matter in question, then, is to give the reader or the spectator that sensation of anguish, that "strange shudder" of which Maupassant speaks—which is not "a shiver as of cold"—how could the author avoid condemning himself to this indefinable disturbance? The sentiment that one wishes to render must first be experienced. If the *Paradox* of Diderot is often true for the actor—and that is still a debatable point—it is not so for the man of letters. The *littérateur* proceeds in the presence of his paper as Talma (who was not of Diderot's opinion) used to proceed when he wished to make an audience shudder. The tragedian practised auto-suggestion, as we should say to-day. He forced himself to imagine that all the spectators who were there before him—everyone, without an exception—had been in a sense decapitated, and that, in place of the countenance which he really saw, each bore a skull on his shoulders. Yes, a skull, with the eye-sockets empty and the jaws without gums—like the skulls that the grave-diggers in "Hamlet" tumble about with their spades. And, submitting to this ghastly illusion, forcing himself to believe that he was playing the tragedy before an assembly of skeletons, like those visions of dead monks that are to be seen at Palermo or in the Capucine galleries at Rome, Talma really experienced a profound terror; and in feeling it, shaken with a horror that had been an effort of the will, he communicated this very shudder, this terror, this impression of fear, to all that house, to all those crowds of spectators. There was, as it were, a phenomenon of repercussion, at once artistic and physiological. Talma shuddered because he really *saw* what he wished to see,—skeletons; and those false skeletons, those flesh-and-blood spectators, shuddered in their turn because they *saw*, not Talma playing Orestes, but Orestes himself, Orestes distracted, Orestes wild with fear, Orestes pursued by the Furies.

I do not know of any example of artistic auto-suggestion more striking and more curious than that. M. Mounet-Sully is a little after the same order, and I recollect that at the dress rehearsal of "Hamlet" he was late. The stage was waiting. I sent to have him summoned by the call-boy. He returned in a moment and told me that M. Mounet-Sully could not come down from his dressing-room then because his costume was not quite ready. "What! It was finished a week ago, that costume. It was tried on and worn. It is complete and perfect." Yes, the costume was complete, but under his doublet M. Mounet-Sully wore braces, and at the last moment he had considered that he must have black ones—*mourning braces*—because *Hamlet* was dressed from head to foot in the trappings and the suits of woe. Those lower strata of costume had annoyed him. "The public would not see them, but I should see them." This was not the auto-suggestion of Talma; but the sentiment comes from the same need—the need for the artist to believe himself the character he plays, the hero he represents.

Thus writers, and writers more than other artists, incarnate themselves in the beings whom they set in motion. Gustave Flaubert believed himself a Carthaginian while he was working on "Salammbô." I once heard M. de Goncourt say, naively enough, but in sober truth, no doubt: "I'm broken up; have just written a love scene." Hoffmann, when he invented his "Contes," had before his eyes, and even under his hand—for he placed them after the fashion of little marionettes, rough models, on his desk—the droll personages which he called up from the depths of his dream.

To sum up, all that is no more than putting into practice the old, the eternal precept of Horace: "If you want me to weep, first weep yourself." Or, since we are concerned with the shudder in literature: "If you want me to shudder, begin by shuddering." I can well believe that Edgar Poe was not very calm, not laughing in "full-throated ease,"—like Alexander Dumas writing the "Mousquetaires,"—when he was summoning up the horrors of the Rue Morgue and the frightful, mathematically ferocious torment of the "Pendulum." And by what likeness of sentiments, or, rather, what community of sensations, was Charles Baudelaire—who revealed Poe to France—drawn towards the genius of the American author? Victor Hugo's saying to Baudelaire, after the

publication of the "Fleurs du Mal," has often been quoted : "*Vous avez créé un frisson nouveau.*" It was precisely this new shudder which Charles Baudelaire found, and was delighted with, in Edgar Poe. There was in him an echo, so to say, a refraction, a repercussion, of Baudelaire's own humor.

Medicine—or at least Hysten, in his dictionary—defines *le frisson* as "an unequal and irregular trembling which precedes fever." This trembling is exactly what follows the perusal of some extraordinary tale of Poe's, of some *poésie macabre* by Baudelaire. There is I know not what artistic hysteria in the case of these remarkable men, studying with a feverish ardor "man out of tune"—to cite Baudelaire himself—"the contradiction set up between the nerves and the spirit; that strange, disturbing *something* which makes grief express itself by laughter, as death finds expression in a grin." And to this morbid derangement, which produces masterpieces among its other manifestations—as certain maladies of plants give their flowers more exquisite colors—these seekers after the shudder added the analysis of "all that element of imagination which floats about the nervous man and leads him to evil." I am still quoting from Baudelaire, and, in very truth, all that element of the imagination of which he speaks is precisely what Maupassant pursued in his brain-sick visions; it is the invisible, the infinite, the "Horla."

The imaginary floats, moreover, about humanity, like the atoms in the air it breathes. The fantastic, the *macabre*, the mystery, the shudder, surround us, constrain, master us. There is no need of being a Baudelaire to meet the disquieting, the morbid, in the daily course of life. Every man who, returning from a ball or from the play, has found himself alone on coming home, and has by chance, in his empty room, seen his own image reflected in the glass after lamp or candle is lighted, has inevitably experienced a strange sensation of disquiet if not of terror. The feeble light sends to the mirror but a discolored reflection, pale, and enveloped in that strange fluidity which the painters call *le flou*. One sees himself in this frame only under a livid and, as it were, a phantasmatic aspect. The color seems dimmer, the glance more strange. It is no longer a reflection, it would seem, that one sees. It is an apparition; and this silent spectre looks at you with a sort of silent keenness. It would not do to remain too long before that vision and in its penumbra.

The glance at that reflection, looked at thus, in the middle of the night, has something of the attraction of an abyss. It is no longer the "Ego" who is there, immovable. It is the ghost of the "Ego," the shudder, the intangible, the invisible, the "Horla," the horrible and eternal "Horla."

And what is proved by this terror which man feels in the face of certain mysteries of his moral destiny or his bodily sufferings, of his faith or of his intellect? What is proved by that shudder which chills us sometimes as it lifted the hair of the prophet Ezekiel? That humanity, however much in love it may be with fact, with brute obvious fact, however much it may be swept along in the train of science, has always the need, the thirst for something of *the beyond*, which is sometimes the consoling utterance of eternal poetry—poetry, with all its caresses, its seduction, its enthusiasm, its pity—sometimes the sombre gulf, the black hole of madness!

All the unquiet souls, all the troubled brains of this close of the century, demand *the beyond*, seek it and summon it. One of the most remarkable of the naturalistic romancers of these latter days, M. J. K. Huysmans, wrote not long ago a book entitled "La-Bas," and in this "over there" he recounted all the mysteries of certain strange associations, groups of the unbalanced seeking "the beyond" in the dark practices of the black mass.

I know not whether the black mass has many devotees in this year of grace 1892. To be quite candid, I do not believe that it has. M. Huysmans has put into the work, I fancy, more of invention than of certified fact. But what is certain is that the mystery, the unknown, the *occult*—to use just the word—counts decidedly a large number of adepts. It is a significant movement, too, which draws so many people at the present day towards that other shudder, which I shall call the shudder of magic. The blame of it rests with materialism. After its extremes of bestiality an idealistic reaction was inevitable. This idealism merely becomes excessive in its turn, and we see the Magi born again. The French spirit is termed Chaldean, though only in exceptional instances, to be sure; and the Sar Peladar, who professes in his stories a sort of odd, magic Catholicism,—the Sar, who is one of the recent curiosities of Paris, only appears as a phenomenon and amazes with his eccentricity much more than he attracts by

his talent, which is nevertheless real, interesting, and not to be denied.

It is none the less true that this taste for occultism has made progress. Magic has special libraries and accredited romancers ; and it has just made a recruit in the person of M. Gilbert Augustin Thierry, nephew of the illustrious author of the "Recits Merovingiens." Again it is proved that humanity does not live by bread alone, and the discoveries of science do not satisfy its appetite. Mystery is still necessary, will ever be necessary to it ; and this renewal of occultism is a strange symptom in a country and at a period which have produced those true magi, Pasteur and Berthelot.

Science, moreover, must share in this taste for the unreal, in this love of the shudder, just as in a conflagration one makes part of the fire. Forever will man take pleasure in being afraid, in subjecting himself to fear for its own sake. "I am afraid of nothing so much as of fear," said Montaigne. He was right. But the love of fear, the taste for the shudder, is with most men a little in the nature of coquetry with the infinite, a sort of flirtation with the greatest of terrors. The child shudders at its nurse's tales, the man at ghost-stories, the woman at narrations of serpents. It is the contribution paid to human weakness. And then we brave this wholly literary shudder, and seem to be rather heroic for having done so.

It would be inexact, when all is said, to affirm that there are not in life strange problems, of which the solution escapes us. Among these are telepathic transmissions, and I could cite many others. I repeat, then, that it is this *unknowable* which draws unquiet spirits, like Baudelaire, Maupassant, and so many others, and brings about the shudder in literature, and they are not all of the unbalanced order—these disturbed spirits. They are curious, no doubt, and taken with the clear-obscuré of human brains—if I may so say,—but they are not diseased.

The two most disturbing tales in the French literature of these last thirty years were written by a man with a healthy, gay mind of the ordinary French type. They are "Pierrot," the account of a neuropathic actor who cuts the throat of a rival while playing a pantomime, and "Cain," which relates the fortunes of an assassin, on whose lips the atrocious, last grin of his victim appears, like a convulsion. Now, the author is Henri Rivière, the com-

mandant Rivière, shot at Tonquin, whose beautiful head—a jesting look all the while on the face—was carried through the villages at the end of one of the pikes of the Pavillons-Noirs. Let literature, be it said in parenthesis, invent a dénouement more sinister than that, or better calculated to cause a shudder!

A writer who died young and is unknown to fame—Charles Barbara his name was—who was contemporary with Charles Baudelaire and was his friend, once wrote a novel which I regard as a masterpiece of this special sort, disturbing and at the same time attractive. It is “L’Assassinat du Pont Rouge.” There again physiology is blended with adventure, for what is necessary to the seeming truth of the fantastic is that it be possible. Prosper Mérimée, in “Lokes,” and in the “Venus à d’Ille,” had achieved the *explicable fantastic*. The story told by Charles Barbara is that of a poor family who, having as a guest a rich man from a distant place, killed him and carried his body to the Seine, at a point near the Pont Rouge. The murderers, in possession of the stolen fortune, and being unable to spend it in Paris, exiled themselves, and took their departure for America, I think. There they meant to live happily ever after—their crime seeming to them no more than a sort of nightmare, driven away by the daylight. But suddenly remorse took shape, and incarnated itself in a child, which—ferocious circumstance!—had the features, the gestures, the very voice of the murdered, who had been dragged down there over the river banks. And grizzly enough was this *tête-à-tête* of the murderers face to face with the incarnation of their victim, which kept growing in their own son.

This new edition of the ghost of Banquo is one of the most striking examples that can be given of the shudder in literature. And with what genius and mastery did William Shakespeare manage this shudder! Hamlet and his visionary fears, Macbeth and his trembling remorse, Lady Macbeth and the spot of blood, King Lear terrified at the crazy wit of the fool, the tumult of the storm! Ah, this mystery, this unknown, this Horla, as the unhappy one called it, who wished to die in order to escape its horrors,—all who think have been tormented by it; and Charles Nodier, the most knowing of men, spoke shiveringly of Smarra to Victor Hugo, who afterwards found the shudder for himself on the island of Guernsey while he was tipping tables and asking them questions in the company of Madame Emile de Girardin.

But in the time of the romantics like Hugo and Nodier the shudder was not born, as it is to-day, of the problems of physiology, but of the mysteries of the imagination. The "Contes Noirs" of romanticism have nothing to do with the scientifically studied hallucination of a Poe, a Maeterlinck, or an Ibsen. In the time of Charles Nodier, and of the Illyrian tales published by Mérimée under the pseudonym of Hyacinth Maylarovitch, there were only vampires, sorcerers, and bronco-laques. The thirties found them believing firmly in the vampires of the *Guzla*, in this sceptical country of France, where Voltaire had written in the previous century: "I declare (apropos of vampires) that in Paris and in London there were stock jobbers, farmers of the revenue, men of affairs, who sucked the blood of the people in broad day-light; but they were not dead, although they were rotten."

Charles Nodier collected most of the tales and legends then in fashion, in a book not to be found now,—a little book bearing title "Infernalina," which does not appear in his complete works. They are no more than old wives' tales, puerile stories of apparitions. "La Nonne Sanglante," "Esprit du Chateau d'Egmont," are as novel as any of them. I find among the number a pretty legend enough, which to-day would cause a smile rather than a shudder. It is called "The Endless Horse."

"I have always loved travelling," says Nodier; "whether on horseback or on foot I am always traversing mountains and valleys. One evening, towards dark, overcome with fatigue, I said aloud: 'If I had a horse, I should be very happy.' Scarcely had I uttered this wish when a rider appeared and said to me: 'You seem very tired, sir, and you have still three leagues to make. If you care to avail yourself of the croup of my horse, it is wholly at your service.' I hesitated. Nevertheless, necessity forced me to accept, and there I was behind the rider. We had not gone five hundred paces when a second rider presented himself. The same offer was made and accepted. Soon a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, at last a twelfth, is in line, and the horse lengthened himself out to make room for the last comer. For a long time fear held possession of me; I did not dare breathe, and was more dead than alive. But what was to become of me when I saw that the cursed creature went like lightning, and that it took a new road. Ah! heaven, cried I to myself, our Lord was in the same company in which we are, and the thirteenth was Judas!"

Thereupon the first traveller called upon the name of Jesus, and—like Mephistopheles recoiling before the sword with its handle in the shape of the cross—the other travellers disappeared, the endless horse was reduced to the ordinary dimensions, and the

traveller, who had run the risk of being carried off to the Witches' Sabbath, found himself safe and sound in the road, at the same place where he had seen the rider appear.

What was noteworthy in these tellers of "contes noirs" is that they did not believe a word of the stories they vended. They worked, smiling, to make others shudder. They had imagination; they had not faith. After having collected so many adventures that were full of terror, Charles Nodier added, as a conclusion to his "Infernalía," these ironical lines :

"Because some stories bearing a certain character of truth have appeared in this volume, it is not necessary on that account to believe them. Ought one, indeed, to believe a person who has seen supernatural things alone? And in all the apparitions there are no witnesses whose testimony carries conviction."

There is not a great difference, again, between these romantic story-tellers and the physiological writers of to-day. These latter believe firmly in what they write because—I repeat—what they write has been scientifically proved. The fantastic, in our time, does not take refuge in Valachian tales and stories of vampires : it is nearer us. It is easily to be met at the Salpêtrière, where hypnotic suggestion makes us touch with the finger of the flesh impossibilities that would have seemed montebanks' tricks to the diabolical Voltaire and the worthy Nodier.

Literature is on the border of science, draws inspiration from it, and finds in the marvels of physiology *motifs* of disquietude and fear, an unpublished shudder, in fact, to speak a little after the manner of Victor Hugo. Charles Baudelaire certainly had an influence on this particular movement. I hear him still, telling us with a grimace not to be forgotten : "I adore Wagner. [He had been one of the first to defend him in Paris.] But the music I prefer is that of a cat hung up by his tail outside of a window, and trying to stick to the panes of glass with its claws. There is an odd grating on the glass which I find at the same time strange, irritating, and singularly harmonious." I do not doubt that there was an element of pose, a dandyism of ferocity, in his inventions. But, after all, Baudelaire, who died without speaking out, could be sincere. He paid for that sincerity with a part of his brain.

M. Maurice Maeterlinck, the author of "L'Intruse"—that invisible Death which is felt everywhere, which is divined roaming

about the house—and of the “Aveugles,” that awesome study in black (if I may use the phrase), that drama of shadow—M. Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian writer, seems a “Baudelaire” of another kind. There is, I think, this same inspiration in such a drama as the strange and disquieting work of Ibsen entitled “La Dame de la Mer,” in which the power of the human glance takes on as much importance as even the darkness and the night in the “Aveugles” of M. Maeterlinck. But, to keep to our French literature, Charles Baudelaire left two disciples, who seek, as he sought, the shudder of modern life. These are M. Paul Verlaine and M. Maurice Rollinat, the one a sort of rural dreamer wandering among desert fields, sombre woods, and old, abandoned graveyards, the other taking over Paris from hospital bed to hospital bed his dark, archangelic spirit, and the poignant lamentations of a rheumatic Bohemian.

Maurice Rollinat is so much and so closely the disciple of Baudelaire that he has put into music the poems of his master, for M. Rollinat is musician as well as poet. He has published “Six Mélodies” after the poems of Baudelaire, and nothing is more poignant, more agonizing, than the music composed by him on the “Madrigal Triste,” by the author of the “Fleurs du Mal.” Music strange, enervating and mournful, the notes of which fall one by one, like hot tears, and make the hearer think of the broken harmonies of the Hungarian “Czardas.”

And when M. Rollinat recites his verses or chants his music, he causes a shudder to creep over the soul of the listeners. With his thin face, sharp voice, and hair falling in tangled locks over a sombre forehead, the poet, before he has spoken, gives the impression of all that is ghastly. He was very much the fashion in Paris all winter, in the recitation of his “Neuroses.” Only the other day he published a volume in which this sad note, the literary shudder, is found again in an intense and attractive guise. It is *Nature*. He especially seeks in this book the impalpable, the invisible—everything there is in things of *the beyond*. The singing of the wind is heard in it, the fantastic element, rising and falling; he sees the viper, stuffed with venom, sunning itself :

*“Et la bête choisit un coin tiède, et s’y lave,
Pour cuver son venin que le printemps renoue.”*

He asks himself whether the reptile, the instrument of death, which he stumbles upon, rolling its envenomed body round an

immense poisonous toadstool, has not a right to life just as much as the passing butterfly. He stops, and, after the burial of some poor person, gazes at the grave-digger, living alone among the rain-washed crosses. . . .

*"Et, pelle en main, cet homme incarne le destin,
Quand il s'en va combler dans la nuit; déjà brune,
La fosse de six pieds qui baille sous la lune."*

The inspiration of the "Fleurs du Mal" is visible.

We have there the echo of Baudelaire,—or, rather, a rustic Baudelaire, a Baudelaire of the Berrichon fields,—for M. Rollinat is of George Sand's country. He is the son of this *Malgache*, of whom there is question in the "Letters d'un Voyageur," and his poetry justly makes us think of that letter of Madame Sand's in which she describes the feeling that sometimes possesses a group of men when the autumn wind sends down the high chimney its lugubrious plaint, sounding like a human voice. And it is then that the shudder seizes on people, with that strange cry which is like the groaning of the infinite.

M. Paul Verlaine, for his part, is a more Parisian and less healthy disciple of Baudelaire than M. Rollinat. There is something of paradox in his morbid inspiration. M. Rollinat gives us the sensation of the recesses of deep woods, black and terrifying. M. Verlaine renders for us the smell of taverns, in which melancholy is tainted with absinthe, of hospitals where suffering and agony fill the folds of the white curtains with the microbes of former deaths. But—once more let it be said—both derive their information from Baudelaire, and their verses would have delighted the author of the "Femmes Damnées." They have kept the shudder of the master.

I must end. All these mournful or ghastly verses, these psycho-physiological researches, these evocations of the infinite, the intangible, the "Horla," these appeals addressed to I know not what obscure element lying at the bottom of the gulf,—are they harmful or wholesome? Is literature profiting from these *neuroses*. Is not this appetite for the unknown bad for both writer and reader? Will not the man who plays with the chimera be devoured by it, even as he who kills with the sword must perish by the sword? No, the shudder in literature does not lead of necessity to the loss of mental balance. A lesion of the brain is necessary before dementia attacks us. But, to be candid, one

does not dabble in psychical mysteries with more impunity than one manipulates the strange chemical substances from which death can proceed on an explosion of picrate. Every mystery is attractive, like a problem, but dangerous, too, like everything that is without bottom and productive of vertigo. The abyss has its loadstone, the void its magnet. The shudder is one of those forms of literature which are subtle and yet naïve. Fear, which is a pain to children, becomes a pleasure for the *blasés*, a caress like any other caress. It has its dangers, like morphine, like absinthe, like opium. I do not know why these stupefying drugs make me think of the literature of those who are in love with the shudder.

What is certain is that darkness, half-light, mystery, anguish—which have their powerful and morbid charm—are exactly opposed to the taste, the temper of mind, the clearness which so long furnished forth the seduction of our France. I am well aware of all there is to be said for *esprit*, and all there is to be said for mystery. Mystery is profound, divine, and wit is merely a light and superficial gift. But there is poison in mystery, as in the viper of Rollinat; and wit has wings, as has the butterfly which floats high in the sunlight.

To sum up, the poetry of night—of darkness, of phantoms—is only a form of fear,—a bad dream, as it were. I prefer to it the poetry of the broad day and the open air. The visions of the insomniac, the dreams of the sick, are not worth the clear inventions of the brain in the fulness of its waking strength. One does not necessarily fall into the abyss because one goes along the edge. No; but one should not play with suffering any more than one should trifle with love.* It is not said to-day for the first time, “Deep calleth unto deep.”

JULES CLARETIE.

* “*On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour*,” — title of play by Alfred de Musset.